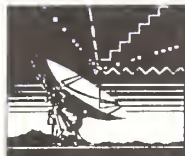


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Broadcasters Letter

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United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • Washington, DC 20250-1300

Letter No. 2703

March 3, 1995

IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR CROP INSURANCE -- USDA will allow late applications for some crop insurance coverage and sign-up procedures are being streamlined. Late applications apply to this year only. There are strict conditions attached to late applications; producers must certify the condition of the crop, crops are subject to field inspections and insurance will not attach until 10 days after the application. Late applications are accepted only when the producers is required to obtain coverage to participate in USDA farm programs. Because of these additional constraints, producers are encouraged to contact local USDA offices to find out when the applicable deadlines are. **Contact: Jim Petterson (202) 720-4623.**

DON'T LET GREEN FOODS TURN YOU GREEN ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY -- Green is a color you might wear -- but don't want to BE -- on St. Patrick's Day. In past years, people have gotten foodborne illnesses from eating improperly cooked or handled corned beef and other foods. Foods typically served on March 17 need safe cooking and handling to ensure foodborne bacteria doesn't crash the celebration. Acting Director Bessie Berry of USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline says, "Keep the product refrigerated or frozen; thaw in the refrigerator or the microwave (if you thaw in the microwave remember to cook the meat or poultry immediately); keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods; wash working surfaces, utensils and hands after touching raw meat and poultry; cook thoroughly; keep hot foods hot and refrigerate all leftovers immediately or discard." **Contact: Sara Beck (202) 720-5604.**

NO HOLDS ON MEXICAN CATTLE -- USDA is withdrawing a proposed rule requiring certain steers and spayed heifers imported into the U.S. from Mexico to be sent to a quarantined pasture or feedlot for finishing feeding or to a holding facility for quarantine and a 60-day tuberculin test. USDA is also withdrawing a proposed rule to amend regulations requiring all Mexican-origin cattle moved in interstate commerce be accompanied by a certificate on which each animal is individually identified. **Contact: Cynthia A. Eck (301) 734-5931.**

LOWER COTTON FEES PROPOSED -- USDA is proposing to lower the cotton classing fee charged to cotton growers for the 1995 crop. Beginning July 1, the fee would be reduced from the current \$1.80 to \$1.60 per bale. Cotton classing fees are set by a formula in the Uniform Cotton Classing Fees Act of 1987. Fees for other cotton classification services offered by the Cotton Division would remain unchanged. **Contact: Becky Unkenholz (202) 720-8998.**

USDA GOES INTERNET -- To access this document via Internet, point your gopher to esusda.gov and a menu selection will appear or send an e-mail message to almanac@esusda.gov. The single line message should read: `send(space)USDA-releases(space)help`. Retrieval instructions and a list of documents currently available will appear. Need more help? **Contact: Maria Bynum (202) 720-5192.**

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED COTTON -- USDA is asking the public for comments on a petition for a determination of non-regulated status for cotton lines genetically engineered for insect resistance. Monsanto Co. wants to produce its genetically engineered cotton lines trademarked by Monsanto as "Bollgard™ Cotton Lines" without securing further USDA permits or acknowledged notifications. The cotton line contains gene sequences derived from plant pathogens and USDA has the responsibility to assure that in releasing any bioengineered plant, no plant pest risk is presented. **Contact: Cynthia A. Eck (301) 734-5931.**

PORK ASSESSMENTS -- USDA is proposing to increase assessments on live hogs and imported pork and pork products from .35 to .45 percent of the market value, as recommended by the National Pork Producers Delegate Body. Increasing the rate of assessment would raise the funding for the National Research and Promotion Program for pork which was authorized by the 1985 Pork Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act. The assessments are levied on the market value of live hogs when sold, and on imported hogs, pork and pork products. **Contact: Becky Unkenholz (202) 720-8998.**

TOBACCO OPERATES AT NO COST TO TAXPAYERS -- USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation announced (February 27) a no-net-cost assessment of .275 cent per pound for the 1995 crop of burley tobacco. Funds in the no-net-cost tobacco account ensure the price support program for burley tobacco will operate at no cost to taxpayers. In addition, producers and purchasers must pay a tobacco marketing assessment of 0.8625 cent per pound. The no-net-cost assessment also applies to imported tobacco that enters the U.S. during the 1995-96 marketing year. **Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.**

CORN STANDARDS REVISED -- USDA wants to amend the U.S. Standards for Corn. USDA is proposing to: report test weight to the nearest tenth of a pound; eliminate the count limit on stones and reduce the U.S. Sample grade aggregate weight tolerance from more than 0.2 percent by weight to more than 0.1 percent by weight and offer stress crack testing as official criteria. **Contact: Dana Stewart (202) 720-5091.**

AMENDING BEAN STANDARDS -- USDA is considering amending the official U.S. States Standards for Beans. USDA is proposing to eliminate the factor "clean-cut weevil-bored" from the grade requirements for the class Blackeye beans and change the grade limits for the factors "total defects," "blistered, wrinkled and/or broken beans," and "splits" for the class Baby Lima beans. **Contact: Dana Stewart (202) 720-5091.**

PILOTING A GRAIN INSPECTION PROGRAM -- USDA is seeking comments on the need for official grain inspection services in the South Texas region and requesting application for designation to provide official service in this area under a pilot program. USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) is requesting comments on the need for official inspection services in South Texas, including estimates of the number of official inspections by carrier, type of service and kind of grain. Under the pilot, GIPSA would allow more than one official agency to provide services to any grain firm located in the South Texas area. The pilot will allow GIPSA to evaluate the feasibility and impact of allowing more than one official agency to provide official services within a single geographic area. GIPSA will not designate any applicants unless there is sufficient need for official services in South Texas. **Contact: Dana Stewart (202) 720-5091.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA # 1970 -- The Department of Agriculture's first ever Economic Outlook Forum is the focus of this week's edition of Agriculture USA. The forces driving the farm economy in the next decade are explored. (Weekly cassette -- 13-1/2 minute documentary).

CONSUMER TIME # 1450 -- USDA fights food stamp fraud; food price outlook; cars made from farm products; weather forecasting going high tech; changes proposed in school lunch program. (Weekly cassette -- consumer features).

AGRITAPE FEATURES # 1962 -- Will farm programs survive?; U.S. farm exports forecast at record levels; income outlook for farmers; a crop insurance safety net; 1995 farm program sign-up reminder. (Weekly cassette -- news features).

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Monday, March 13, feed outlook; oil crops update; rice outlook; wheat outlook. Tuesday, March 14, annual livestock slaughter report; weekly weather and crops. Wednesday, March 15, milk production; aquaculture update. Friday, March 17, cattle on feed report; sheep production; sugar and sweeteners update. Monday, March 20, agricultural outlook. Tuesday, March 21, weekly weather and crops. Thursday, March 23, livestock, dairy and poultry outlook; catfish processing. Friday, March 24, livestock slaughter; ag trade update. **These are USDA reports we know about in advance. Our newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup.**

USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545

Material changed at 5 p.m., ET, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

ACTUALITIES -- Acting Agriculture Secretary Richard Rominger and USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition & Consumer Services Ellen Haas on efforts to prevent food stamp fraud and on federal feeding programs (with B-roll); USDA Crop Insurance official Ken Ackerman on the late application procedure for crop insurance sign-up (with B-roll); USDA Chief Meteorologist Norton Strommen with his weekly weather and crop update.

UPCOMING -- Coverage of 1995 Farm Bill Congressional hearings.

SATELLITE COORDINATES FOR TV NEWSFEEDS:

Thursday, 3:45 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET, Telstar 302, Channel 6 (Transponder 3H), (C-band), audio 6.2 and 6.8, downlink frequency 3820 MHz. Monday, 11:00-11:15 a.m. ET, Galaxy 4, Channel 12 (C-band), audio 6.2 and 6.8, downlink frequency 3940 MHz.

Comments and suggestions are welcome regarding USDA broadcast services.

Call Larry A. Quinn, (202) 720-6072; write 1618-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-1300.

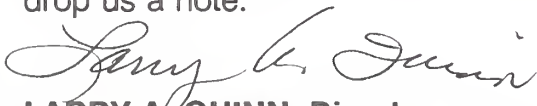
OFF MIKE

INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTERS...from 13 countries spent time with us this week as part of a six week study tour to look at radio broadcasting in the U.S. We had the opportunity to explain USDA's radio programming to representatives from Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Barbados, Botswana, Costa Rica, Egypt, Estonia, Israel, and Kazakhstan. The international visitors will divide into teams and leave Washington to visit radio operations in North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Ohio, New Mexico, Colorado, Oregon and California. Their project is sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency.

PEOPLES RADIO NETWORK...uses USDA Consumer Time and Agritape features for news programming that they provide for 300 mostly small-market stations, reports **Wyatt Cox**. The network originates its broadcasts for three hours on weekday mornings, and they have one hour segments on Saturday morning and evening that originate from White Springs, FL.

WHY DO YOU READ THIS LETTER?...From nearly 160 respondents to our recent readership survey, we learned that our "news summaries" and "off mike" pages are the most popular, rating 4.3 on a 5-point scale (58 percent always read the news items and 67 percent always read "off mike"). Seventy percent said the primary reason for reading the letter was for the news while 51 percent listed this column. Ratings for interest in all the subject categories covered in the news were evenly spread with none rating lower than 3.7 on the 1-5 scale. Eighty-five percent use news items as background, and 28 percent use them as copy to read on-air.

YOUR COMMENTS...Many of you consider this letter a good source of information on agriculture, USDA and other broadcasters. Several noted that the letter contained information they can't get anywhere else. You've given us ideas for improvements that we are considering. We appreciated hearing from you and hope you'll continue to give us feedback and interesting information. If you have news we can share through this column, fax us at **202-720-5773** or drop us a note.



LARRY A. QUINN, Director
Video, Teleconference and Radio Center



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